



Knox helps pace Kentucky in rout of Ill.-Chicago

Sports, 1C

Courier Journal

Louisville, Kentucky

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Ex-addict finds inspiration



“There’s nothing really beautiful about Austin,” admits Brian Johnson, 33, who has been capturing slices of rural life of the Indiana town and its surroundings for the past four years. As a former drug user, he knows about the small town’s struggle with addiction which gained it infamy with its high HIV rate a few years ago. MATT STONE/LOUISVILLE COURIER JOURNAL

Once tied to painkillers in crisis-filled Austin, Ind., man gains clarity through his dynamic paintings

Matt Stone
Louisville Courier Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Inside the garage of a ranch home in Austin, Indiana, an easel sits in the middle of the concrete floor. Nearby, paint containers sit on a table, not for home projects or walls but for creating.

There are several pieces of finished artwork hanging on the wall where normally you’d find yard tools.

With a light touch, Brian Johnson dabs his brush into a chewing tobacco container filled with paint. His large hand gently dips and sways as he finishes painting a rural sunset scene on a country road near his home. A blaze of colors creates a dreamy setting.

It’s an image not normally associated with Austin, the small town that became infamous a few years ago for its HIV crisis and drug addiction. Driving through the

See CLARITY, Page 6A



Paintings created by artist Brian Johnson depict the rural life around Austin, Indiana.

“He has a natural ability to produce a very powerful image.”

John Michael Carter
President of the Oil Painters of America



Tony and Lori Richards support a foster parents’ bill of rights. NATALIE GOMEZ/PORTRAITS BY NATALIE

Ind. foster parents push state bill of rights

17 states, including Ky., already have such a law

Marisa Kwiatkowski
Indianapolis Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

For three years Tony and Lori Richards raised three boys as their own.

The Indiana couple, who served as the boys’ foster parents, hovered over the boys when they were sick, hugged them when they cried, took them to the dentist and introduced them to soccer and basketball.

So Tony Richards said they were frustrated when the Indiana Department of Child Services excluded them from certain parts of the process of finding the boys a permanent home.

“We felt DCS failed the children,” he said.

Now, he and other foster parents throughout Indiana are pushing the state to pass a foster parents’ bill of rights. The proposal includes 24 rights, including the right to be treated with “dignity, respect and trust” by DCS; the right to “timely financial reimbursement”; the right to information before and during placement; and the right to refuse placement or request removal of a child without “fear of reprisal.”

Seventeen other states, including Illinois and Kentucky, already have passed a Foster Parent Bill of Rights, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The one proposed in Indiana would not give foster parents new authority, Richards said, but it would let foster parents know which rights they have so they can best advocate for themselves and children in the system.

DCS officials have not responded to a request for comment on the proposal.

State Sen. Ron Grooms, R-Jeffersonville, is sponsoring the bill.

See FOSTER, Page 8A

USA TODAY
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